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The President's Daily Brief

March 12, 1976

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LEBANON

The leader of the coup attempt yesterday, Sunni Muslim General Ahdab, claims to have the backing of the Christian army commander and all important army units. In fact, however, many high-ranking officers have not declared for either Ahdab or President Franjiyah.

Private Lebanese militias and Palestinian forces yesterday seized most areas of Beirut with almost no fighting. These groups so far have simply reestablished control where they have traditionally dominated, giving no clue as to whether Franjiyah or Ahdab will emerge on top.

We do not know for sure whether Damascus played a role in the coup attempt, but tend to believe that the Syrians were surprised by the move and were uncertain how to respond. The Syrians--and the Palestinians--will be tempted to back Ahdab if he shows signs of succeeding.

Israeli forces along the Lebanese border went on alert yesterday because of the increasing numbers of Lebanese army bases occupied in the southern part of the country this week by rebel Muslim forces. We doubt that the Israelis will intervene directly even if the government in Beirut is seized by Ahdab--a conservative Muslim.

The potential for armed clashes involving Israeli troops in Lebanon remains high if Tel Aviv's troops continue to patrol as aggressively as they have over the past two weeks. They have carried out three cross-border raids since February 26.

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The Soviets are giving selective coverage to the US election campaign. In contrast to their modest treatment of the New Hampshire primary and their total blackout on Massachusetts, the media have provided a detailed rundown on Florida.

Pravda yesterday carried a fairly straightforward report of Florida's primary results and added that former governor Reagan "practically lost the possibility of advancing his candidacy to the post of president." Red Star printed a harsh political biography of Senator Jackson, describing his career as having rested on the pillars of "oil, aviation, and Zionism." It alleged he lack public support and contrasted his policies with those pursued by the administration.

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SOUTH AFRICA - ANGOLA

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NOTES

Fighting has broken out for the third time in two weeks between Polisario guerrillas and Moroccan *forces in* Western Sahara.

[redacted] elements of a Moroccan infantry battalion in southern Morocco and a battalion in Western Sahara clashed with guerrilla forces on Wednesday. Rabat expects more of such attacks and has ordered additional security measures. Polisario guerrillas [redacted] need a military success to prove the Polisario Front and the newly created Saharan Democratic Arab Republic are entities worthy of international recognition.

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Rhodesian *Prime Minister Smith is expected to send a high-level delegation shortly to* Zambia *for talks with President Kaunda.*

The delegation [redacted] wants to explain Smith's "new terms" for a peaceful settlement of the Rhodesian problem. We have no information on these terms, but there is no evidence suggesting that the talks are intended to be anything other than another play for time. Smith met again yesterday with black nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo.

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Soviets

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Turkey *has postponed indefinitely the Aegean air defense exercise that was to have been held in the vicinity of the* Greek *island of Lesbos.*

Originally scheduled for March 9 and 10, the exercise had been twice delayed because of weather. Ankara apparently believes it has accomplished one of its purposes in scheduling the exercise--that of re-emphasizing the international character of the waters and air space that separate mainland Greece from the Aegean islands and hence Turkey's right to use these areas.

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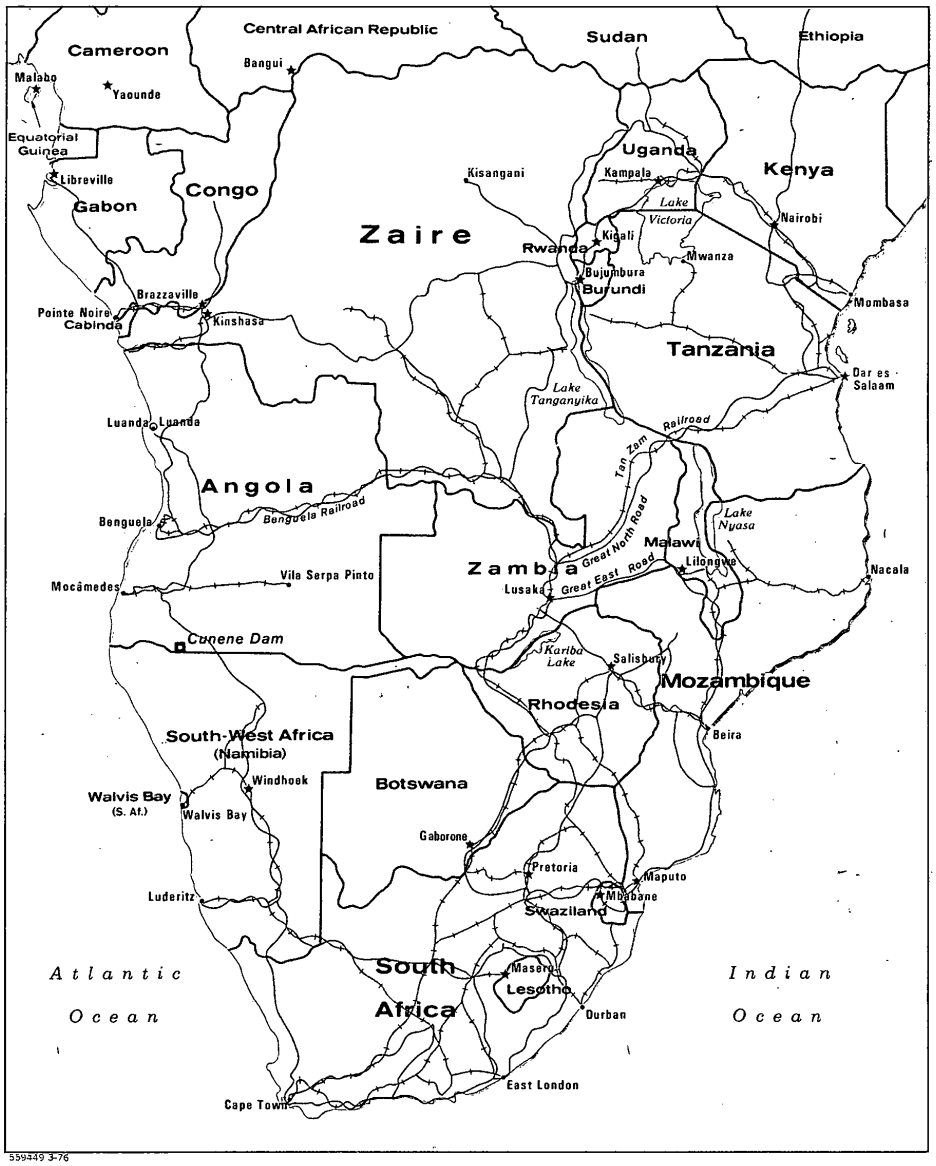
Southern Africa



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ANNEX

SOUTHERN AFRICA

We present below conclusions from an estimate on the likelihood and consequences of further conflicts in southern Africa over the next six months. The estimate was approved yesterday by the US intelligence board.

Likelihood of Expanded Conflicts in Southern Africa

In Rhodesia:

--An expansion of insurgent activity against the white Rhodesian government will be avoided only if a political settlement is reached in the next six to eight weeks. This is unlikely to happen, and the momentum of preparations for an expansion of guerrilla warfare will probably become irreversible.

--The USSR will probably concentrate in coming months on developing closer ties with Mozambique, Zambia, and Tanzania and strengthening both materially and politically those insurgent elements that are amenable to its support and direction. It will also support a more aggressive African policy vis-a-vis Rhodesia, calculating that this would allow for an expanded Soviet (and Cuban) role in supporting the insurgents.

--China will provide additional training and advisory personnel and materiel support to the insurgents, but because of its limited resources, Peking may have to resign itself to some loss of influence to Moscow and Havana.

--Until near the end of the six-month period covered by this estimate, the increase in guerrilla warfare will probably be fairly modest. Once the rainy season--which favors the insurgents--begins in October, however, an appreciably larger increase in the insurgency is likely, and the insurgents will be able to operate more freely in Rhodesia.

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--The chances are better than even that by the end of the six months covered by this estimate some Cuban military personnel will be in combat with the insurgents inside Rhodesia. It is unlikely, however, that the Cubans in this period will have initiated large-scale conventional operations using heavy equipment.

--Throughout the period, Rhodesian security forces should be able generally to contain the insurgency to border areas but will have some difficulty in maintaining order in urban areas and in insulating the rural populace from guerrilla influence.

--By the end of the six months, the insurgents will have extended their areas of operation to cover most of the Mozambique-Rhodesia border, and they will be in a substantially stronger position, both relatively and absolutely, than they are now. The increased insurgency and the effects of Mozambique's imposition of sanctions will place severe strains on the Smith regime and probably lead it to offer token negotiating concessions, but will not cause its collapse or compel it to sue for peace.

--Beyond six months, the Cuban presence is likely to increase, with the magnitude and nature of the increase depending on Havana's and Moscow's assessment of developments within Rhodesia and on the attitudes of Mozambique and other insurgent supporters toward an expanded Cuban involvement.

<u>In the Namibia/Southern Angola Region</u>:

--The odds are that Angola and South Africa will reach a political understanding resulting in the withdrawal of South African military forces from Angolan territory.

--Given the constraints on both sides, we do not believe that the likelihood of a major confrontation between South African military units and Cuban forces is very high. Neither Luanda nor Pretoria appears to be seeking a confrontation.

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--If no agreement is reached, the MPLA and the Cubans might launch a military probe against South African forces in southern Angola to determine whether they would quickly withdraw. The Soviets probably would not urge this course on Neto over the next six months, but they also probably would not withhold support if it were requested. They would advise, however, that if a military effort were undertaken, it be a cautious one.

--In any case, the Soviets would probably argue vigorously against pushing on into Namibia. The Cubans undoubtedly know that they could not achieve a military victory there even with forces substantially larger than those now in Angola.

--Guerrilla activity by the South-West Africa Peoples Organization will increase, and the Soviets, Cubans, and MPLA will provide assistance to SWAPO. Nevertheless, even with substantial outside assistance, SWAPO insurgents will be unable to expand their capabilities in the next six months to the point where they cannot be easily contained by South African security forces.

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